Looking at celebs’ lives through a teenager’s eyes

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The novel *A Taste of Fame* looks at one issue that is not new in this self-absorbed, celebrity obsessed life of our modern world.

Argwings Otieno decided to look at the life of a celebrity through the eyes of a 14-year-old boy who is a perfect greenhorn in entertainment and celebrity circles.

*A Taste of Fame* is a modern story about a boy, Rando, who adores a music star, Dee Zasta, so much that he wishes to be like him.

Rando begins behaving like Dee and even starts imitating the star’s singing style.

One day during a concert for upcoming musicians, Rando performs exactly like the star. Dee is so impressed that he invites Rando for a collabo during a forthcoming concert for established musicians.

**Follow blindly**

One week of close contact with the music star opens Rando’s eyes to the truth about the real life of a celebrity.

The book seeks to bring out the ways of celebrities and how unsuspecting young people adore and follow them blindly while imitating their lifestyles — which more often than not is fake — to the point of losing track of what is important in their own lives.

The entertainment industry in Kenya is young, but the nature of Western influence in the industry is palpable.

The book looks at this life from the point of view of a character that we all can identify with (even if in our mind’s fantasy world); a fan who can sing and dance like his idol.

Through the experiences of the young boy and his idol, the readers are invited into the “appearances” world of celebrities that live in our midst.

Their lives are layered — the pressure to keep a face, the threat of people who are cut to slander, the unending mob of fans, the constant hounding by journalists and the drive to keep being the best. The life can be as false as it can be real. The lengths to which celebrities can go to be “cool” can sometimes be beyond comprehension and utterly selfish.

As the book delves into this life, one can easily pick the change of life in Rando from a private person to a celebrity and its attendant accompaniments, complete with the fakery and fast pace.

Otieno is the winner of the Burt Award for African Literature, 2013.